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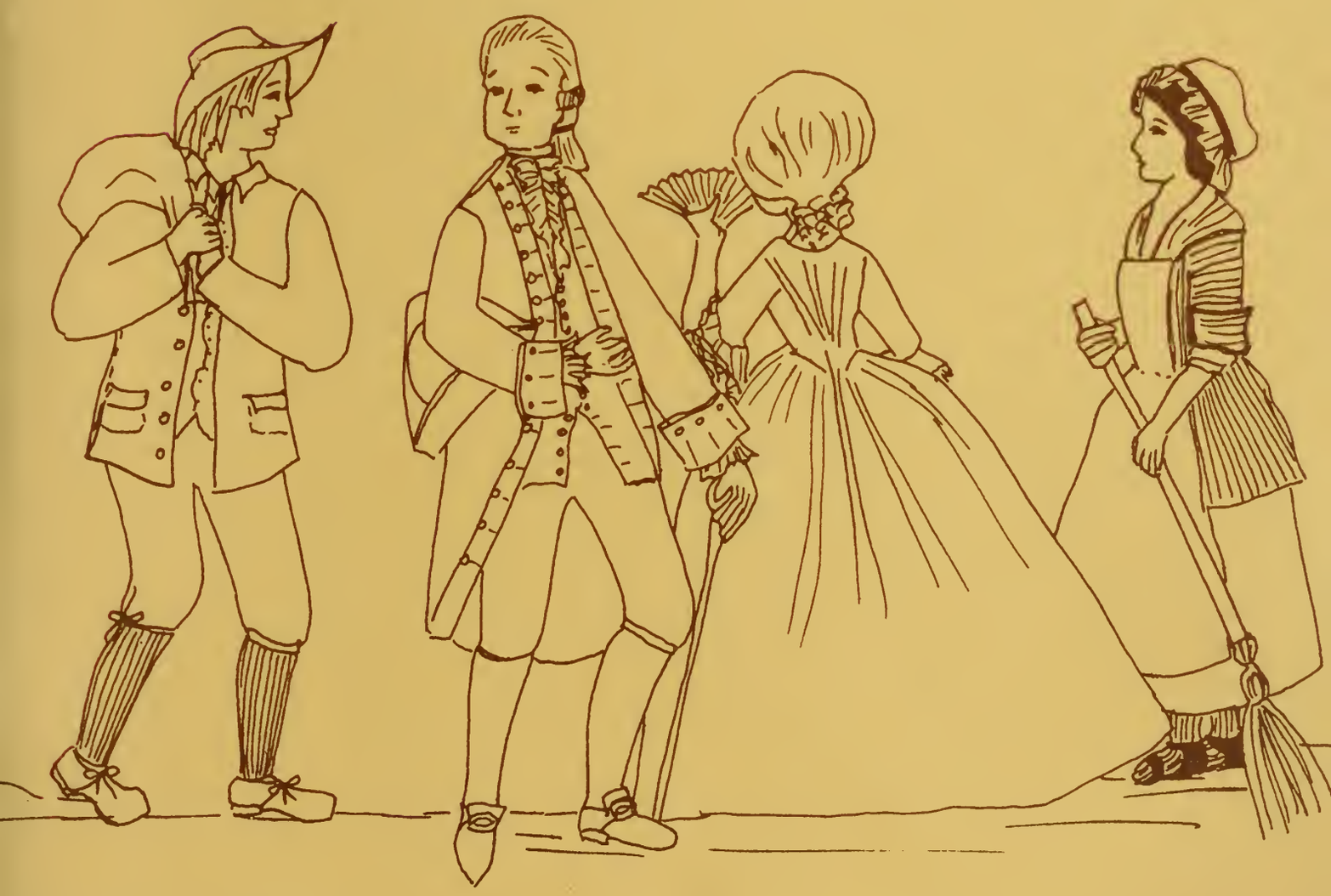
CLOTHING FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF HIGHER AND LOWER STANDING

A working pamphlet to aid the imitators of New England citizens of the eighteenth century.



Prepared by Minute Man National Historical Park, Mass.
National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

This booklet was written for Minuteman National Historical Park. It is dedicated with much thanks to the Volunteers who give their time and most of all their enthusiasm to literally bring the eighteenth century alive for the twentieth century visitors. Special thanks to Karen and Ed Dooks and Terese McCauley who have done much research and have created many of the patterns of clothing used at the Park.

Compiled by Marjorie Hicks
Minuteman National Historical Park

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INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service, especially during 1975 and 1976, will become involved with the community in historical programs requiring men, women, and children to wear period dress.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to assist 20th Century people involved in 18th Century bicentennial celebrations, and historical house tours to construct the proper costuming. One helpful thought to keep in mind: 18th Century people were very practical (out of necessity) in their manner of making clothes. In one sense, the person who is untrained in the art of modern seamstressing has a distinct advantage over the trained professional because 18th Century construction techniques were different. The adage about never using modern-day standards to judge the past is especially important in the making and wearing of 18th Century clothing. In museums old clothing can be found with hems left unfinished, fabric pieced in the strangest places, the shoulder seams of shirts and shifts off the shoulder, and gown sleeves with the seams in the front of the arm instead of under the arm. Many professional seamstresses hired to make reproduction 18th Century clothing have been heard to exclaim, "That just could not be right," while pouring over patterns and pictures of the clothing. Yet the design of the clothing makes sense when it is realized that few patterns were used, and that clothes were either made to be worn and patched again and again, or as elegant showpieces with no attempt to hem or edge seams to prevent raveling. Not only were the styles of the 18th Century different than those of today, but the concepts of sewing were different also, in many cases more practical for their lifestyle.

Today, when people think of 18th Century clothing, often gross generalizations are made, and the clothing supposedly created as "reproduction clothing" often takes on the appearance of halloween costumes, tending to portray our modern-day stereotypes of 18th Century people rather than what they looked like. It is almost impossible to completely forego our modern ideas of beauty and style, but perhaps the safest way to create reproductions would be to closely use actual 18th Century primary sources. Choose a person you wish to portray from your town, find (if possible) inventories listing clothing, copy portraits for hairstyles. Know the person's background, education, political and religious beliefs, and act that character. Of course, the easiest people to portray are the wealthy, because portraits were done of them. However, there are ways to find out what the middle and lower class wore. This booklet includes some sample inventories and other primary sources.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

There were many different styles popular in the 18th Century, but all the styles had a few basics in common. Low scooped or squared off necks, sleeves just past the elbow, waists emphasized, the layered look, and very full skirts were universal traits of 18th Century women's dress. Although a few children's garments fastened in the back, women's clothing usually fastened in the front. The layers of clothing included a shift, petticoats, a jacket bodice or overgown, and bonnets and caps. Kerchiefs, shawls, and neckerchiefs (sometimes called "fichus" by the fashion elegants of the period) were optional, and aprons always topped work dresses.

Farm wear for New England women was comfortable and nonrestricting. A simple drawstring shift, a full skirt ending above the ankles, a jacket bodice with rolled up sleeves and laced in front, a cap and an apron were the basic articles of clothing. Women and girls often went barefoot in the house and yard. Rough leather shoes were worn when protection from cold or terrain was needed. Scarlet cloaks (sometimes called cardinals) were most often worn by farm and merchant women. These cloaks, commonly referred to as "red riding hoods" (which will of course incur quite a bit of teasing from modern-day wits), were regarded as country middle-lower class wear by the elegants of Boston. In her diary Anna Green Winslow, a twelve-year-old school girl just becoming aware of fashion, is horrified at the thought of wearing her red cloak in the streets of Boston. She fears it will identify her as a market woman or, as the British soldiers called country folk, a country pumpkin.

A town woman would usually wear a fancier gown over a shift and petticoats. A bonnet or a straw hat worn over a mobcap might be added. Often a fashionable pelisse or capuchin, hip-length capes with friar-like hoods, would be worn with the dress. These capes might be blue, grey, scarlet, or green in color and made of silk or wool.

THE ESSENTIAL UNDERGARMENT: THE SHIFT

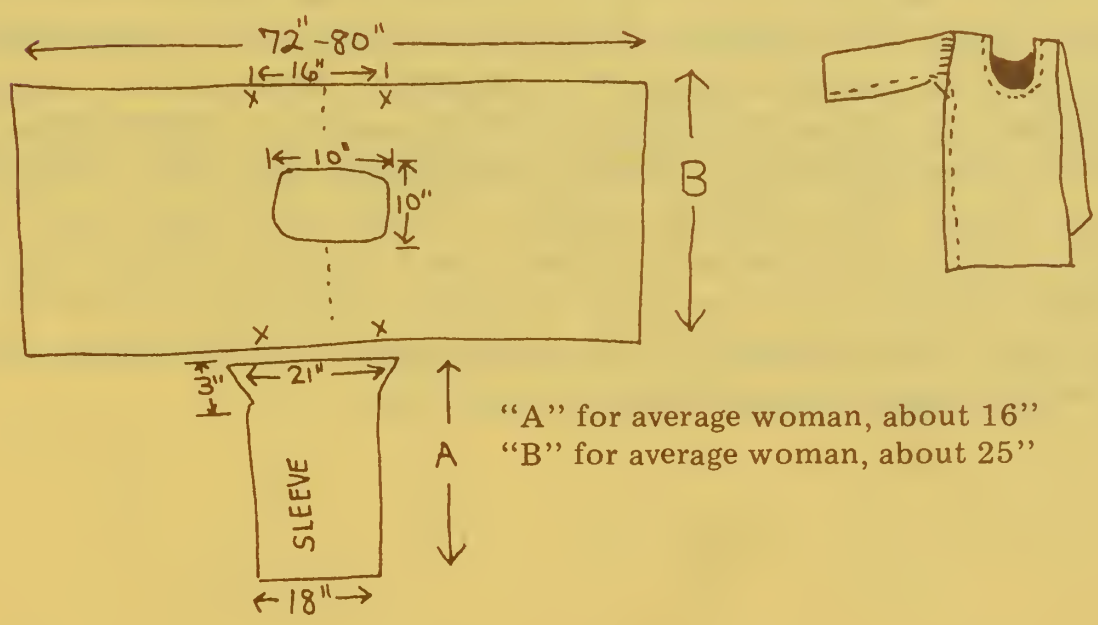
The chief woman's undergarment for any type of dress was the shift (called "chemise" by elegant Bostonians). This was a rather shapeless slip-with-sleeves. Usually it ended around the knees, looking much like a long peasant blouse. A low scooped neck and sleeves ending below the elbows are important. The neck edge and the sleeve edges often showed beneath the overdress, so the style and the fabric of the shift varied accordingly. Please see the diagrams and note the variations. The best way to make the shift is as the 18th Century woman made hers: no pattern. This shift not only looks accurate, but is easy once the concept of 18th Century clothing construction is understood. Use drawstrings. Elastic had not been developed yet.

The shift was the major undergarment for an 18th Century woman. It can be made relatively easily with about 3½ yards fabric and a yardstick. The length of fabric for the body is twice the distance between your shoulder and your knees (average is 72"). The sleeve length is the distance from your top shoulder to 4" below your elbow. Cut a squarish neck hole, about 10" wide and 10" long (again, average size). Mark off with ruler 8" on each side of center of the shift body. The sleeve (widest end) is to be attached here, using tiny pleats to fit. After both sleeves are attached, fold shift so that you can sew in a continuous seam the length of the sleeve, underarm, and shift sides.

To finish neck: First, try the garment on. If the neck if far too big, fold edge over and sew: insert drawstring and pull to adjust. If the neck is just a little too big, take in a few tucks here and there, creating a pretty ruffled effect. Lace, ruffling, etc. can be added to dress the shift up.

To finish the sleeves: Add either cuffs, or drawstrings, or ruffles, all ending just below the elbow.

Fabric — white or off-white. Muslin, fine linen.



"A" for average woman, about 16"
"B" for average woman, about 25"

THE PETTICOAT OR SKIRT

Petticoats are often listed in inventories, and are even described in period newspapers as being sold, worn by runaway servants and children, lost or stolen. The words skirts and petticoats were used interchangeably. The number of petticoats worn varied with the seasons and activities. In the winter many petticoats, usually quilted, were worn for warmth. The best petticoats were embroidered and trimmed with lace and ribbons. One petticoat, advertised in a Boston newspaper as being stolen off a washline, was richly embroided with trees, deer and flowers. A striped woolinsey (wool woven with linen) petticoat and a yellow quilted petticoat were worn by a Boston servant when she ran away in December 1770. Under a simple country work bodice one or two petticoats should be sufficient. Under an elegant ballgown three or more petticoats should be worn.

No pattern is needed to make a petticoat. Measure out four yards of 45" fabric, gather at one end with a drawstring, sew the side seam, hem, and voila! If a pattern is desired, choose a very full peasant skirt from one of the traditional pattern companies. Leave out the zipper; the fullness of the skirt should cover the opening. Drawstrings on petticoats were common, however, waistbands did exist, and these can be closed with buttons, lacings, or brass hooks and eyes. The length of skirts and dresses in general was a function of the class of the lady and the task to be done. Therefore, farm skirts might be as high as mid calf (especially in the lower classes in the Southern colonies) while ballgowns might drag on the floor.

THE ESSENTIAL THEN, NOT ESSENTIAL NOW, UNDERGARMENTS

There was a great emphasis on narrow waists, wide hips, and pushed up bosoms in the 18th Century. Therefore, the very elegant dress always had underneath it contraptions for bringing about the desired figure. Stays or corsets were the chief torture contraptions. The garments were often laced in the back, requiring another person to do the tightening and lacing. Made of heavy linen or canvas, reinforced with whalebone or wooden slats, these garments created a stiff formidable armor on the elegant lady. Paniers were straw or metal baskets strapped around the waist to hold the petticoats out to the sides (this emphasis of the hips made the waist look smaller). For more information about "causets and such" please see Elizabeth McClellan's **History of American Costume**, pp. 152, 170, 212 and Norah Waugh's **Corsets and Crinolines.**

For the dame or young lady involved in reproducing these effects, caution is advised. Some of the contraptions used in Colonial America were not only uncomfortable but also health hazards. Fainting from lack of breathing room, malformed spines and inability to move are a few hazards of style. Some ladies today imitate the paniers by wearing pillows attached to a waistband — certainly more comfortable than baskets! Keep in mind, however, that even in the 18th Century working women never wore paniers, busks, or hoops under work clothes. These were formal affair undergarments only!

Perhaps the most sensible solution for the person trying to represent the elegant ladies of the 18th Century would be to study the manners, affectations, and grace of the period. Consciously keep extremely stiff and straight posture, walk with slow gracious movements (as if you were a breakable china doll), flourish ribbons and fans, and practice a few curtsies. These few dramatic tricks will convey far more that flavor and mood of the 18th Century than all the "causets and such" ever worn by all the ladies of Boston ever could.

THE SLEEVED JACKET BODICE
or
What The Imaginative Colonial Dame can Do With Just One Basic Design

This garment has been referred to in various inventories and advertisements as "sleeved waistcoat", "jacket", "bedgown", and "gown". It can be laced together, hook and eyed together, hook and eyed to a stomacher, tied with bows, or simply wrapped and held by pins, brooches, or by an apron that tops it. The type of fabric used and the tightness of fit determines whether it is a ballgown, a town dress, or a work dress. All the styles are worn over a shift and petticoat.

1. wrap style
   Pinned at top, held in place by apron. almost knee-length.
2. laced in front, slightly shorter gown than #1.
3. fastened with brooch and hook and eye, long worn over quilted petticoat.
4. fastened with bows, same length as #3, 5, but hitched up with bows.
5. front folded back and hook and eyed to stomacher, gown worn long.

APRONS

An apron was an indispensable item of the 18th Century farm woman. Gathered herbs and vegetables could be wrapped in aprons, and aprons were handy for lifting hot pots from the fire. Aprons were not only practical but symbolic of housewifely duties and virtue. The lack of an apron meant that you were unwilling to work, quite sinful in an age when "idle hands" did "the devil's handiwork". The use of the apron was carried to extremes in the early 1700's, when elegant ladies occasionally attached lacy aprons to their ballgowns, giving the "little country maid" look, and when some brides donned aprons at their wedding receptions to prove their wifely virtues. In New England most women wore clean starched aprons to Sunday meetings as a mark of propriety. Just about any color possible was used in aprons. In the 1750's green aprons seemed to be the fashion, while in 1770 Boston young school girls thought that black bib aprons were quite the style. In 1770 Boston, knee-length aprons were popular. An apron is very easy to make. Two yards of either 36" or 45" wide fabric is sufficient for a basic apron, and a bib apron can be made with an extra ¼ yard. Drawstring aprons were very common, but occasionally waistband aprons were used.

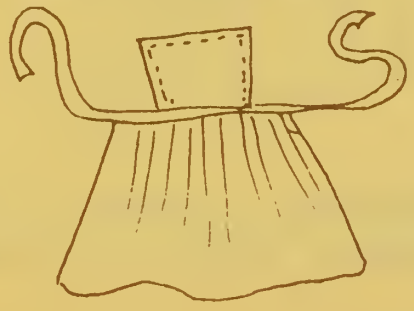
Fold under 2" and stitch, preferably by hand.

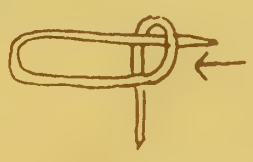
Can be unhemmed or hemmed. Use the length edge (selvage) to prevent raveling.

Insert drawstring.

***Width:** This, of course, determines the length of the apron. A practical work apron is mid-calf, so the width would be about 30". A stylish apron is knee-length, width of fabric: 22".

BIB APRON. Cut two rectangles, sew by hand to center of apron. The bib apron should have a waistband, not a drawstring. The bib is held up with pins. Although brass straight pins were more common, bent pins, resembling our safety pins, were used also, and are certainly more comfortable.





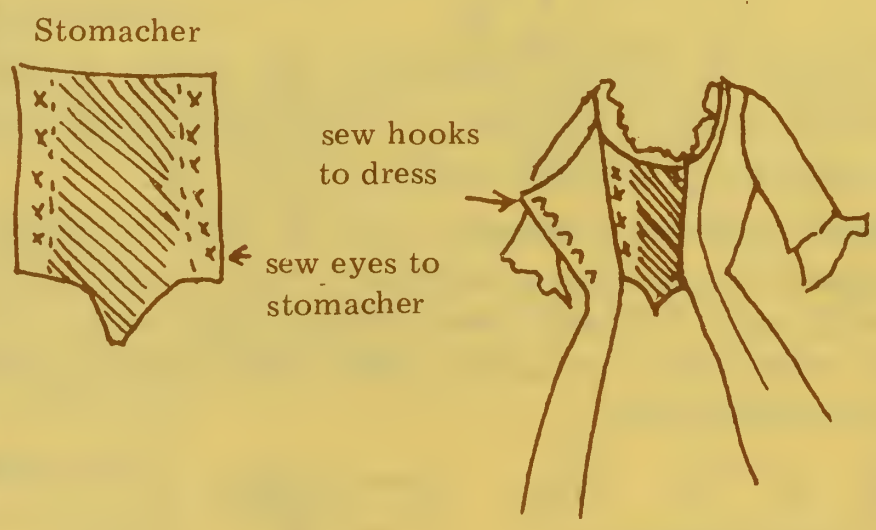
Home-made pin from bent wire (brass)

TWO FANCY GOWNS: VARIATIONS

Strange as it may seem, ballgowns are the easiest 18th Century garment to reproduce, because there are actual 18th Century gowns on display or in storage in many museums throughout the country. If an actual gown from a museum is to be copied, keep in mind that most gowns have been changed by daughters and granddaughters, and others after the 1700's. For example, there is a beautiful wedding gown pictured in McClellan's **History of American Costume,** page 166, figure 212, that has long sleeves of different fabric than the dress. These were probably added on later when long sleeves came into fashion. Often museums label dresses "mid-18th Century" but give no information about later adaptations to the garment. However, by studying the original stitching, and by looking at portraits of the period a reasonably accurate reproduction of the gown can be made. Two popular styles of gowns are shown on the next page. For simplicity's sake, they will be called "pointed bodice gown" and "Watteau style gown" or sacque. The Watteau gown got its name from the French artist who painted ladies in this gown quite often. The basic shapes were taken from Norah Waugh's patterns (see bibliography) and variations of these two shapes can be seen in hundreds of portraits and still existent gowns.

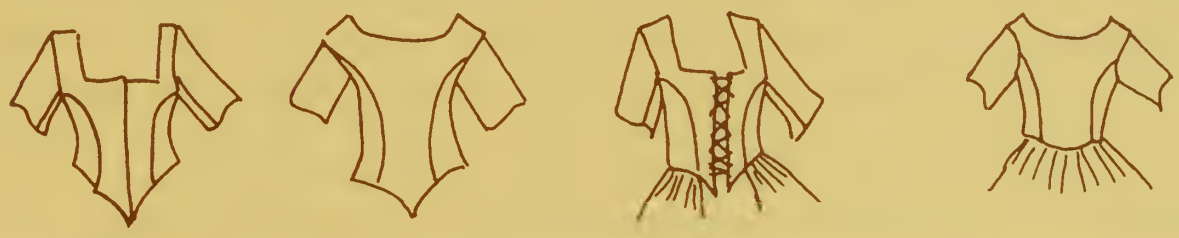
Please note that these gowns would be worn over shifts of fine cambric linen, with ruffles and lace attached. If the gowns are to be shown at their best, they should be worn over four or five petticoats.

Some gowns were worn with a front piece called a stomacher. The stomacher generally was intended to create a flat front. Stomachers were often made of brocade or silk and were often embroidered. They were attached to the front of the gowns with hooks and eyes.



ONE VARIATION: POINTED BODICE GOWN

FRONT VIEW BACK VIEW FRONT: LACED BACK: ROUNDED



The bodice can be a separate piece from the skirt or sewn onto it. When rectangular skirt panels are sewn to the pointed back, a train is created. Trains were only worn for very formal occasions. If a train is not desired pin up the back point and sew the skirt onto the bodice to the side back seams. Unpin the point, and hand stitch it on top of the skirt. An alternative would be round off the back point and then attach the skirt. The bodice opens in the front. It can be closed with hooks and eyes, bows, laces, or a stomacher.

ANOTHER VARIATION: WATTEAU STYLE SACQUE

BACK LINING

Back View Short Sacque

Front, attached to stomacher, worn over quilted petticoat

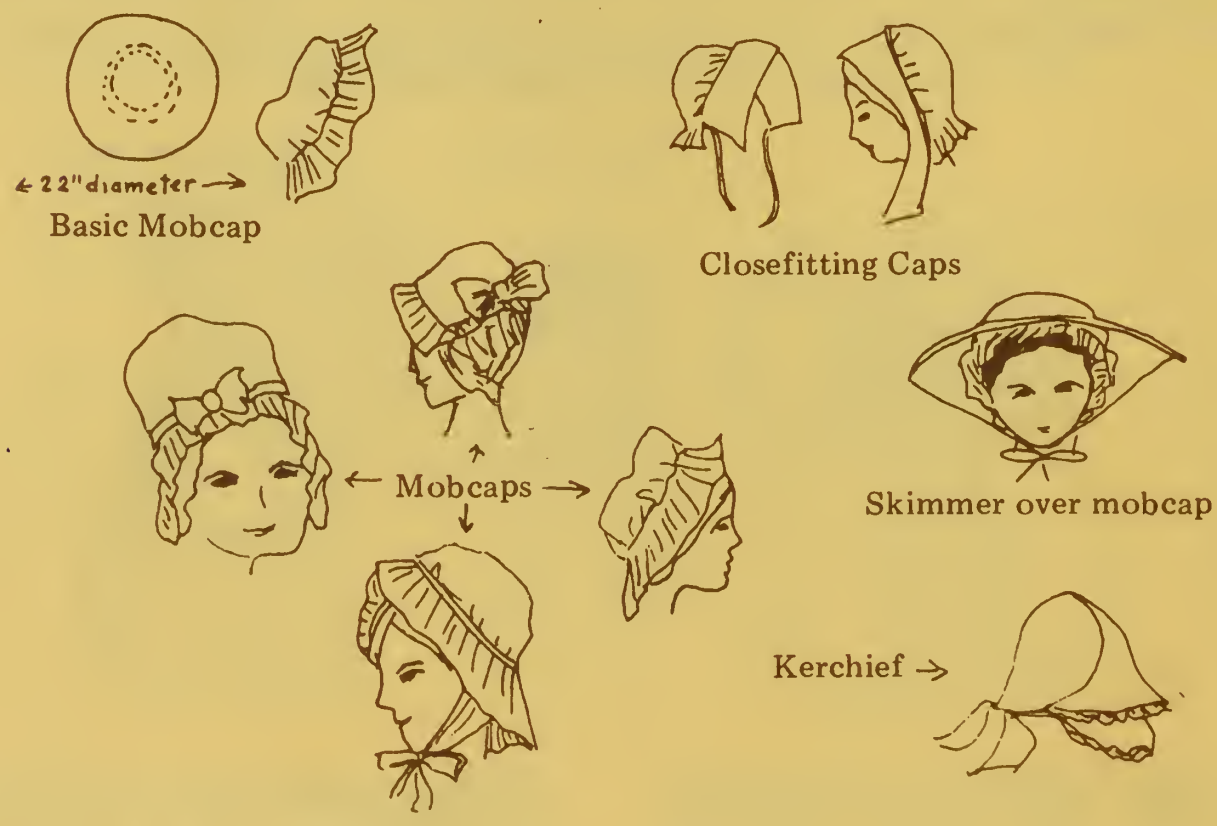
Watteau gown can be cut short or long gown can be hitched up in back.

HATS, BONNETS, MOBCAPS, AND SUCH

It was considered proper in the 18th Century for ladies to wear caps or bonnets. The most common cap for working women was the practical mobcap (also called "Ranelagh mob" or "mob"). There were many variations on this style. A farm woman wore caps that kept her hair neatly covered while she worked. The simple mobcap was greatly exaggerated into the gigantic "Queen's Nightcap", a new fashion in 1770 Boston. Smaller versions of the mobcap made of fine lawn or lace were set upon elegant hairstyles. Pinched together in the center and forming a figure 8, these rather silly caps were called "butterflies". The mobcap needs no pattern — just imagination. Start with a circle of fabric (a 22"-24" diameter makes a good size cap), insert a drawstring, add bows, ties if desired.

Close-fitting caps, resembling baby bonnets, were also quite popular. Often the brim would be continued and hang down below the neck. This could be left hanging, or could be tied under the chin. For walking or riding a calash bonnet was sometimes worn. This was a bonnet rather resembling a covered wagon placed on the head. Indeed, this bonnet was named after a type of covered carriage. In Mme. Reidesel's diary of her experiences in 1776 New York and Boston, she often mentioned riding in a calash and described it as a canvas covered coach drawn by horses.

Kerchiefs were tied around the head in various styles, and "skimmers" (straw hats with low crowns) were elegantly balanced on top of mobcaps and tied with ribbons under the chin.



TOP OF THE HEAD TO THE HEEL OF THE SHOE OR
Hairstyles, Shoes and Stockings

The hairstyle was dependent upon class and activity. Usually the hair was pulled away from the face, and although occasionally natural parts had their way, the enviable look was a swept-up pulled back from the forehead, with no center or side part. In the country the hair was worn long, braided, or in a simple top knot and covered by a cap or bonnet. Portraits of Bostonian ladies usually show very simple hairstyles, not powdered. However, for parties or balls the hair was usually quite elaborately dressed. Cartoons in England, France, and the colonies illustrate some of the absurd creations: hair set to look like a ship in full sail, or real birds in nests perched atop an already high updo. The New England upper class copied, in a more subdued fashion, these high styles. Often horse hair rolls were used to add height, and paste jewelry, ribbons, and strings of pearls were pinned in the hair. Some ladies of distinction "frizzled" their hair into many small curls. Occasionally a few false curls were added to the hair. Some ladies had wigs, but most powdered their own hair using pomatum (lovingly referred to in the 20th Century as "greasy kid's stuff"). The hair was often left unpowdered, but was usually heavily perfumed.

Stockings are illustrated quite well in the somewhat bawdy sketches of the English artist Hogarth. The stockings were held up by ribbon garters tied either above or below the knee. Silk, cotton, and wool stockings in every color are advertised in Boston newspapers. Also, stockings were easily sewn and knitted on the farm. Many young girls learned how to knit by making their own stockings.

There were many types of shoes for women. A farm woman often went barefoot in the summer, but she also had coarse leather shoes, sometimes resembling mocassins, sometimes resembling a man's tie shoe. Her shoes could be homemade or purchased. Dress shoes were poorly made and it is truly a wonder that any exist today. Often they had cardboard soles, and they were usually made of silk, embroidered linen, brocade, or velvet. The heel, 1½ to 2 inches high, flared out at the bottom (like the squash heels popular in the 1960's) and the toe was very pointed. Occasionally kid leather was used for the tops of the shoes, but fabric was more common. Often metal oval buckles or paste brooches decorated the shoes.

All the shoes of the 18th Century were straights, that is, no right or left shoe. Accurate 18th Century shoes are difficult to find. The best answer so far is to make your own, until a modern shoemaker consents to help out. A good farm boot for women can be made from the patterns for mocassins in many crafts books. Heavy

leather shoes will suffice for women on the farm, not in the street or at a ball. For a dressy shoe, perhaps an old squash heel shoe from the 1960's could be modified by taking the top off and attaching a fabric slipper. A last ditch alternative (not altogether authentic but better than wearing platform shoes or sneakers) might be to look for those folding fabric traveling slippers. Occasionally while looking at thousands of shoes in modern stores, one finds a satisfactory shoe that can be adapted.

GLOVES, POCKETS, FANS, AND FANCIES

Many types and lengths of gloves were available in the 18th Century. Because the dress sleeves usually ended at the elbow, long gloves were worn, with "glove tightenings" (ribbon or woven hair ties) to hold them in place. There were half-fingered gloves, as well as mitts, or mittens. Newspapers advertised silk, embroidered, linen, lace, kid gloves, as well "glazed lamb" mittens and yellow and blue mitts. Muffs of deerskin, raccoon, sable ("in the hair"), of wool and silk were used in the winter.

Bags that hung from strings fastened around the waist were called pockets. These were extremely practical for both the farm woman, who carried keys and sewing gear, and the elegant lady who carried fans, scents, and lace-edged handkerchiefs. Pockets came in many shapes, but the most popular shape was the pear shape, which had a vertical slash. Pockets were often embroidered. When women's gowns changed drastically in the 1790's-1800's and became delicate transparent high-waisted slim dresses, the pocket strung around the waist was abandoned for the impractical "reticules", drawstring bags carried in the hand and the ancestors of our modern-day pocketbooks.

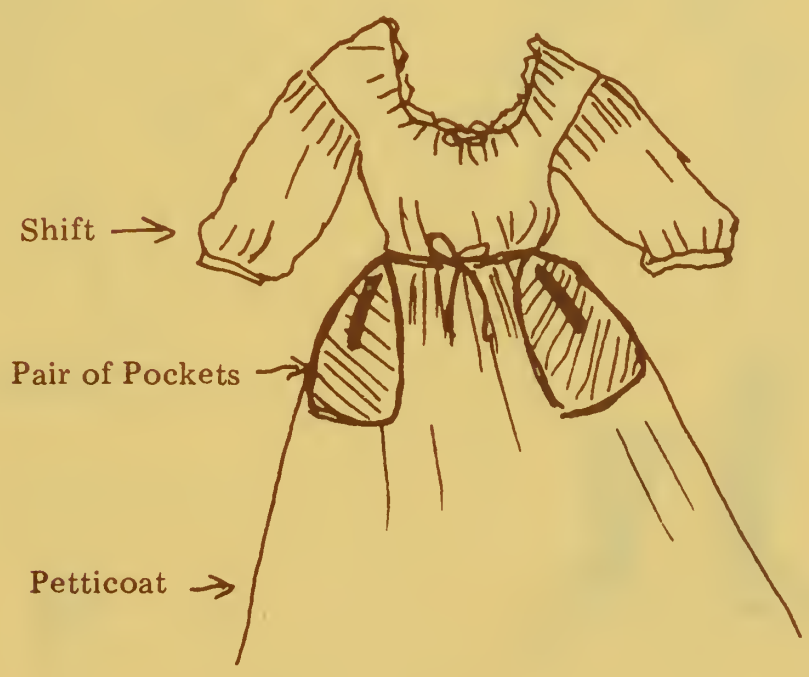
Fans were extremely popular in the 18th Century, especially because fans were thought of as a French fashion, and the French were the leaders of fashion and the models of every well-dressed Bostonian. Fans were used for flirting and as a sophisticated method of communication, displaying with various flutters anger, agreement, pleasure, or boredom. Fans were usually hand-painted silk attached to wood slats, but silver and engraved ivory fans also existed. The fans were painted with scenes of Grecian romance, social and political events, words, and bars from operas. There were even calendar fans, fortune-telling fans, and fans with riddles. Other popular themes were those also used in crewel work: Scottish thistle, English Rose, Grecian Ivy, and numerous native wildflowers.

Jewelry was used to excess by 20th Century standards. Bracelets, necklaces, lockets, hair and bonnet pins, and rings covered the well-dressed lady. Paste (cut glass) jewels were popular, as were amber and jet stones. White (pewter, silver) or yellow (brass or gold) jewelry was prevalent. Black feathers stuck with abandon in the elegant hairdo was a popular fashion in 1770 Boston. Black silk or velvet ribbon tied tightly around the neck was fashionable. Many Massachusetts ladies owned necklaces made of thirty-nine pea-size gold beads.

Strings of pearls were often strung through the hair. Brooches often held the dress bodice closed. More practical fastenings used in assorted garments included wood or metal buttons (two or four holes, or shank type), brass hooks and eyes, and brass straight pins.

Pocket

Sometimes a pair of pockets were tied around the waist.



MEN'S CLOTHING

A properly attired 18th Century gentleman would wear the following: shirt, stock, breeches, stockings, shoes, waistcoat, coat, and hat. In winter the great coat, gloves, and boots might be added.

The quality, cut, and fabric used was determined by social status. A farmer or tradesman might wear homespun linen or wool, adding perhaps a leather apron. The upper-class Boston gentleman might wear imported cottons, silks, and velvets, and might add a cane, wig, and gloves.

The admired posture of a gentleman was to round the shoulders, turn a leg handsomely, and to stick out his stomach, causing his coat to fall gracefully back. Modern posture, which demands standing erect with broad shoulders, creates an absurd picture when worn with 18th Century style clothing. A brief study of men's portraits will aid in the imitation of both posture and clothing.

THE ALL PURPOSE SHIRT

The shirts of the 18th Century were designed for comfort, practicality and simple construction. They were very loose fitting, especially in the body and sleeves. Underarm gussets added to the fullness. Shirts were knee-length. Since underwear was relatively unknown*, the shirt protected the skin from scratchy woolen and coarse linen breeches. No pattern is needed for a man's shirt, because it is made up entirely of rectangles (see construction directions on next page). The construction techniques create a shirt that fits quite differently than modern shirts: The shoulder seams fall off the shoulder and the sleeves feel far to large until they are buttoned at the cuffs.

Portraits show middle and upper-class gentlemen in white shirts. I have yet to find an 18th Century gentlemen attired in a colored shirt under waistcoat and coat. However, in 18th Century literary descriptions of farmers, checked shirts are listed as typical of the working class. Woolen, linen, and cotton shirts can be found in inventories of Massachusetts men. See the inventories at the end of this booklet.

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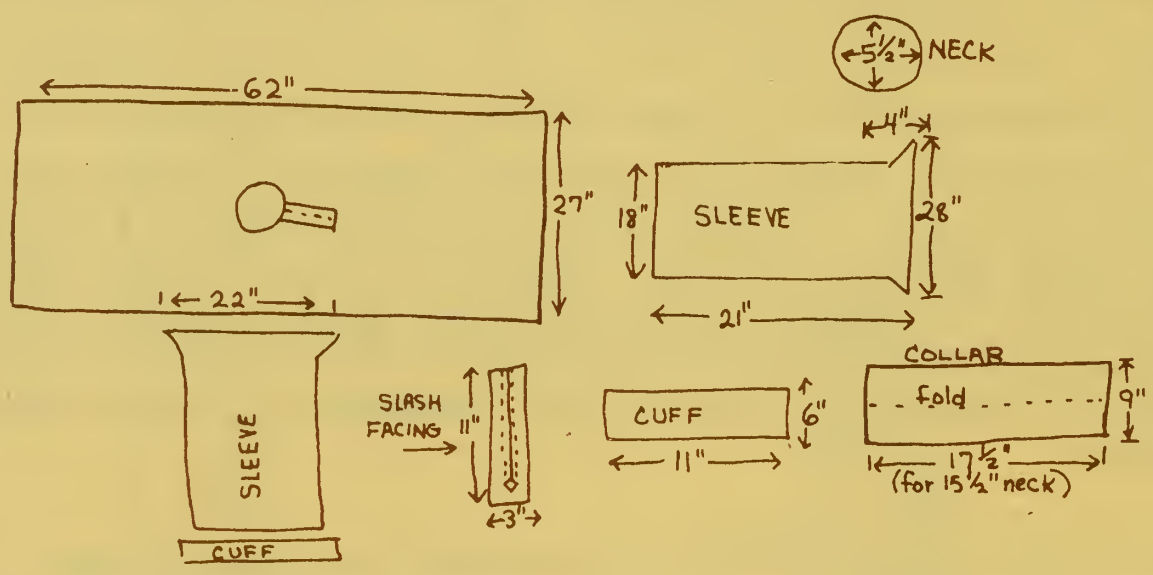
*Very rarely, inventories will list "breeches linings", perhaps the forerunners of modern underwear. The purpose was probably warmth. Men's and women's underwear was becoming popular in Italy in the 18th Century, but was generally unknown elsewhere.

CONSTRUCTION OF SHIRT

Requires about 3½ to 4 yards fabric. Some good fabrics (in order of preference) are linen, muslin, cotton that looks like linen. This fabric can be white, off-white, tan, brown, checked, striped, basically any fabric that looks hand woven and dyed with vegetable dyes. The measurements given fit an average size man. The best way to use these directions is to first measure the man and see if his measurements match those listed, allowing for seams and such.

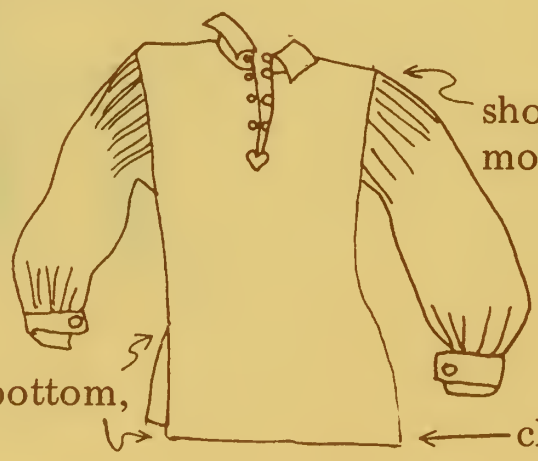


1. Gather 28" end of sleeve to fit into space marked 22". Gather in tiny pleats rather than full gathers. Gather other sleeve end into cuff, leaving 1½" overlap if a buttoned cuff is desired. Fold shirt and sew underarm and side seams.

2. On front of shirt, stitch the slash facing, sewing in two parallel lines about ½" apart. Slash between the stitching lines, starting from neck hole down about 9". Turn the lining (facing) in the inside, hand sewing it down. Sew a reinforcement at the base of the slash. This could be a diamond, a triangle, or, as was very popular in the 18th Century, a heart.

3. Fold collar, stitch, turn right side out. Fit collar to neck hole and stitch. Attach buttons and loopholes to neck opening.

4. Hem shirt bottom.



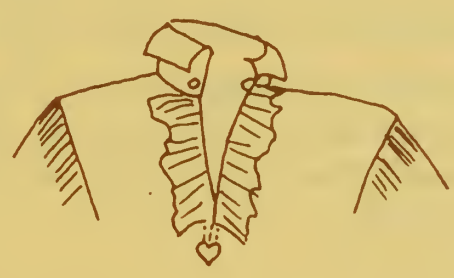
THE "BEST SHIRT"

Portraits usually show men in full dress with waist coat, matching breeches and jacket, and a white ruffled shirt. Most inventories list among personal estate a "best shirt" of cambric (fine handkerchief linen). Contrary to the image given by modern stage costumes, those ruffles under the 18th Century man's chin were not attached to the stock, but to the shirt itself.

How to make a "Best Shirt".

1. Sew the regular shirt (previous page) excepting buttons.
2. Cut neck ruffle from 2 rectangles 6" by 22". Fold.

3. Run a basting stitch along non-folded edge. Gather to 8".
4. Pin this ruffle to the neck slash on shirt, starting at collar. If the ruffle is sewn to the **inside** of the slash edge, it will stand out better.



5. Add button and button loop to collar.

Optional: Ruffled Cuffs

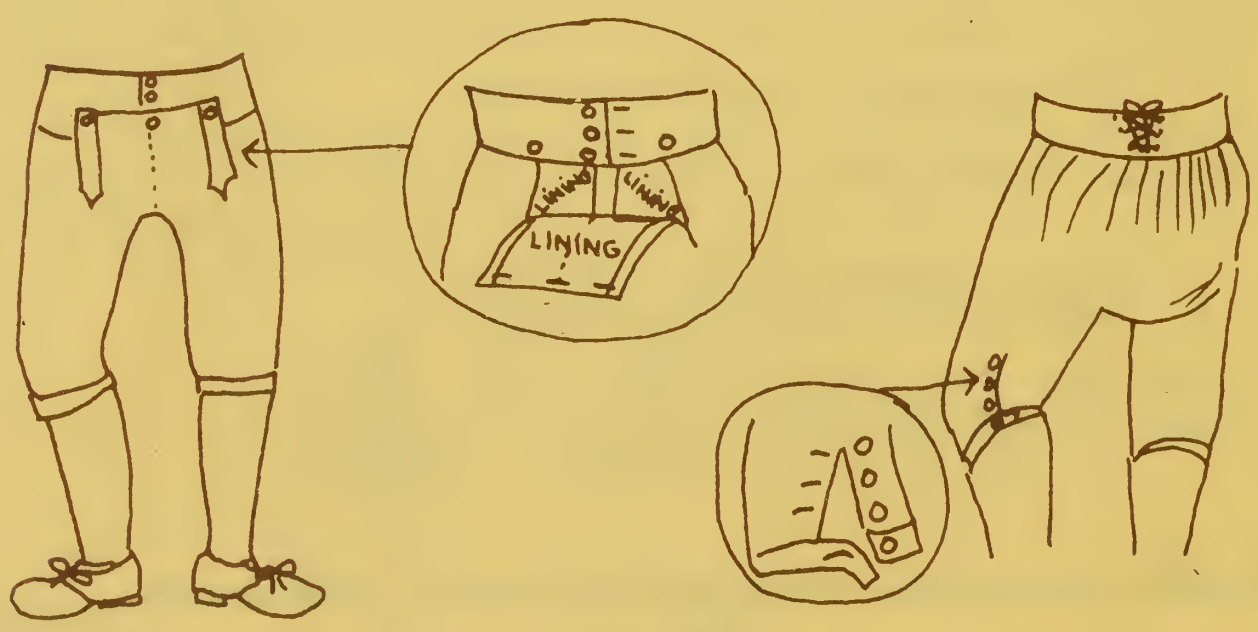
1. Cut 2 rectangles 4" by 20" and fold.
2. Gather to 8½" and attach to cuff.

NOTE: When ruffle is added, the cuff should be very narrow.

BREECHES

Breeches were worn by every class, with the occasional exception of farm workers and sailors. "Trowsers" (also called "skilts" or "tongs") were sometimes included in a farmer's inventory. These were loose-fitting pants which hung below the knees in varying lengths, and they were more practical than the tight-fitting breeches for hot fieldwork and work of sailors. Usually farm tongs were made with a drawstring top and the front and back were identical. To make these, use a pair of loosely-fitting pajama pants as a pattern, and insert a drawstring at waist. These can be made from coarse linen or wool. Please keep in mind, however, that these tongs were only worn in the fields and not in the streets of town.

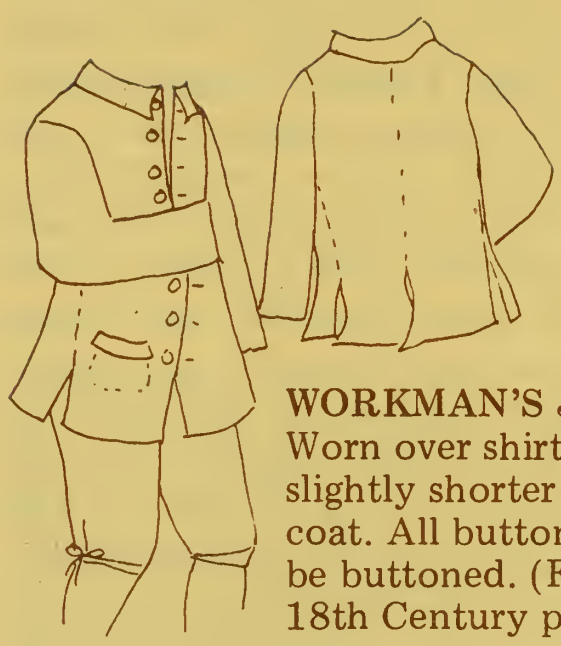
Breeches (another name: "small clothes") ended just below the knee with kneebands that helped to hold up stockings. These bands could be fastened with ties, buttons, or buckles. The front of the breeches had a flap front (sort of a "Dr. Denton's in reverse") held up with buttons sewn onto a waistband. This front panel not only facilitated getting in and out of the breeches, but also provided a neat front under the cut-a-way coat. The seat of the breeches was very full, to allow the man to sit down without pulling the knee-bands above the knees. No gentleman of the 1770's would want his knees to show. The legs, however, were tight-fitting, to allow the gentlemen to "turn a good leg." Because of the full cut in back and the tight cut in the legs, modern pants cut down to look like breeches never quite look or feel correct. No belt was worn to hold breeches up; instead an adjustable lacing was added to the back of the waistband to insure fit.



WAISTCOATS AND COATS

Waistcoats (sometimes spelled "weskits" in inventories suggesting the way the word was probably pronounced) were worn over a shirt and breeches and under a coat. In many inventories including those of Samuel Jones (died 1755) and Job Brooks (1794), both of Concord, and Joseph Bridge (1776) of Lexington, the article "Jacoat", "Jackcoat", or "Jacket" is listed. I suspect these are waistcoats because they are often listed with matching breeches and coats. Also, when "Jacoat" is used the inventories list no "weskit". For a few examples, see the sample inventories in this booklet. Waistcoats and coats changed gradually throughout the 18th Century. In the early 1700's, waistcoats were almost as long as the coats (knee length). The coats had full skirts and could button all the way, hiding waistcoat and breeches. As the century progressed, waistcoats got shorter and coats became more and more fitted. By 1750 the coat was usually not buttoned at the bottom, but was cut away so that the breeches, now having a flat "flap front", and the shorter waistcoat could be seen. A study of portraits will show this progression. Older gentlemen in 1775 usually clung to the outdated longer waistcoat, while young dandies sported shorter hip-length waistcoats. This progression was to continue into the 1800's when the fashionable Napoleonic style flaunted bolero-like vests and coats cut away at the waist in front. The cuffs on the coats also changed.

In the 1600's gigantic cuffs often buttoned to the coat sleeve at the elbow. By the 1750's the cuff had shrunk in size, but the military coats kept these buttons. The civilian coats sometimes took on this "military" look (see the cuffs on the great coat, next page). The cuffs kept dwindling in size, and by 1775, some coats lost the cuff altogether, and merely had braid trim where the cuff used to be. Lapels down the front of the coat was another military style adopted by civilians. Sometimes embroidery was used to decorate the front edges of the coats. The most elegant coats had false buttonholes — these coats were designed to remain open and show off the beautiful waistcoat and breeches beneath. Occasionally they were fastened in the front with hooks and eyes.



WORKMAN'S JACKET Worn over shirt and slightly shorter waistcoat. All buttons can be buttoned. (From an 18th Century print)

COURT COAT, Matching coat and breeches "false" buttonholes, coat has hook and eye in front. Embroidery on collar and front.

FROCK COAT, front and back. Could be made from wool, add braid if desired. All buttons can be buttoned. Collar can be worn up or down.

GREAT COAT. The overcape can be separate or attached. Collar worn up or down.

OUTER GARMENTS

Since capes are easier to make than coats, it would be convenient to say that these were commonly worn by 18th Century men. However, capes are extremely rare in Massachusetts men's inventories (1750-1800). The cape was an outdated style sometimes worn by military officers, but civilians seem to have preferred the great coat. One or two great coats are listed in almost every inventory I've seen. The most popular colors by far were blue and grey. The great coat often had an overcape made up of two or three layers. The top layer could be folded down unbuttoned as a collar, or buttoned and worn up to protect the face. Many great coats had the military style cuffs with buttons. Other articles listed in inventories include woolen shirts, sleeved waistcoats (a waistcoat with quilted sleeves can be found in Boston's Art Museum), gloves, boots, "mitts" or "mittons," woolen caps, "leggins", and "underwescoats." The winter run-away ads in Boston newspapers indicate the lower-class method of keeping warm: wearing layers of all the clothing one owned.

HAIR, WIGS, AND HATS

In the early 1700's every proper gentleman wore a wig, usually specially dressed by wig-makers. Since wigs are relatively uncomfortable on top of hair, men shaved their heads. In summer months the wigs were too warm to wear around the house, so Boston gentlemen adopted a pseudo-Indian style of clothing: The banyan and turban. The banyan, an Englishman's concept of the gown worn by the rich in India, was a loose dressing gown (somewhat resembling modern bathrobes). Matching turbans adorned bald heads. Occasionally these were worn in the streets. A few brave gentlemen even had their portraits painted in this becoming attire. During the 1700's there was a general trend in the Western world towards middle-class democracy and away from court frippery. The casual appearance of the English country gentleman became a popular fashion trend in Europe and in America. Slowly the trend moved away from wigs and towards natural hair, and by 1770 most men, especially those of liberal leanings such as Adams, Hancock, and Jefferson, had grown their own hair out and did not powder it. Some older gentlemen out of tradition continued with the wigs. By 1775 few Concord and Lexington inventories list them.

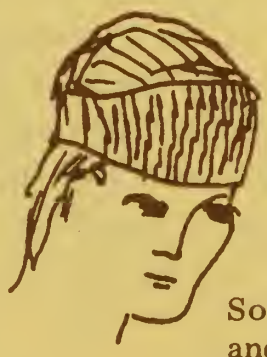
Hats could be cocked or uncocked. By 1775 many civilians had adopted the hat cocked on three sides (not called "tri-corne" or "three-cornered" until after the Revolution). Farmers often wore hats uncocked to protect them from the weather. Contemporary prints show the Boston lower class wearing uncocked wide-brimmed hats. Sometimes just one or two sides were pinned up. Hats could be made of beaver, beaverette, or felt hats, of white, black, green, buff, or orange color, and with gold and silver braid, buttons and ribbons for trims.

Round Hat

Cocked Hat

Once Cocked Hat

Knit Stocking Caps



Sometimes used as "Liberty Caps" and embroidered with slogans

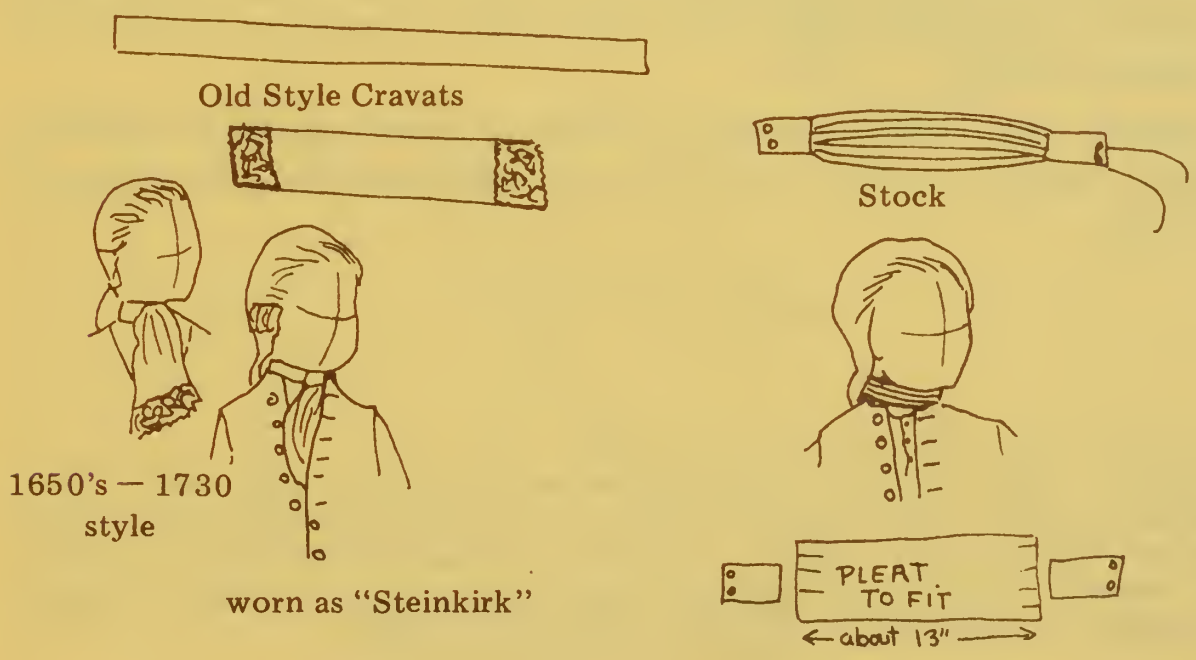
SHOES, STOCKINGS, & STOCKS

Men's shoes were generally fastened with buckles or ties. They were "straights," that is, no left or right. Shoes were usually black and varied during the century between square and pointed toe. Farmers and tradesmen when working, usually threaded laces through the tops. For dress, the lower and middle classes used pewter and brass buckles, while the upper class sported silver (occasionally gold) buckles adorned with "paste" (cut glass jewels).

Stockings were generally knitted. They could be ribbed wool, or fine cotton or silk. "Clocked" (embroidered up the sides) stockings were popular. White or black silk stockings were considered dress wear; however, grey and blue "yarn" (wool) stockings are often listed as everyday wear. Dandies, generally called "macaronis" would cover their legs "with all the colours of the rainbow; even flesh-coloured and green stockings are not excluded" (Town and Country Magazine, England, 1772, quoted in Norah Waugh's Cut of Men's Clothes, see bibliography, page 107). Stockings were held up by the breeches band, although sometimes extra garters were needed.

Older gentlemen of the 1770's might use the old-fashioned cravat ("steinkirk"), consisting of a very long piece of fabric wound around the neck and tied in front with ends hanging down. However, most men by 1770 wore the stock, a small piece of fabric pleated and fastened around the neck with laces, buttons, or buckles.

Stocks were generally white or black linen, cotton, or silk. Some of the military adopted leather stocks; hence the term "leather-necks."



Farmer's smock or "frock". A loose-fitting shirt worn untucked. These were quite common in Europe, but unless they listed as "shirt" they do not seem to be included in Massachusetts farmers' inventories.* In Europe, these shirts were beautifully smocked and embroidered, the designs sometimes indicating to what trade the wearer belonged (i.e., shepherd, cooper). Often these shirts were made so that the front and back could be switched (see diagram). Trowsers were sometimes worn by lower-class farmers.

The clergy. Just as today's clergy are distinguished by their neckwear, so were those of the 18th Century. A minister's stock was made like a regular stock, and then two tabs were attached in the front. According to Elizabeth McClellan (see bibliography) clergy stocks, or "bands", could be black or white; however, most clerical portraits indicate the preference of white. During religious services the Protestant ministers wore a black academic gown, open in the front. For modern reenactments, modern graduation gowns suffice (after a very cursory tour of clerical and academic supply stores, I found clerical robes have changed more over the years in construction, design, and fabric than have the academic robes, excluding, of course, the paper graduation gowns). The High Church of England ministers wore the black Geneva gown with white surplice and black stole, and, of course, the bands. Roman Catholic liturgical robes have not changed except in the fabric used. The bands were worn as street wear by all of the ministers and priests.

The craftsman's apron was a one-piece leather bib apron extending to mid calf. Almost all paintings or prints depicting blacksmiths, coopers, cordwainers, etc., show these aprons almost as a symbol of "craftsmanship".

Sailors. See Copley's painting of **Watson and the Shark** (original at Boston Museum of Fine Arts) for an interesting variety of seamen's clothing.

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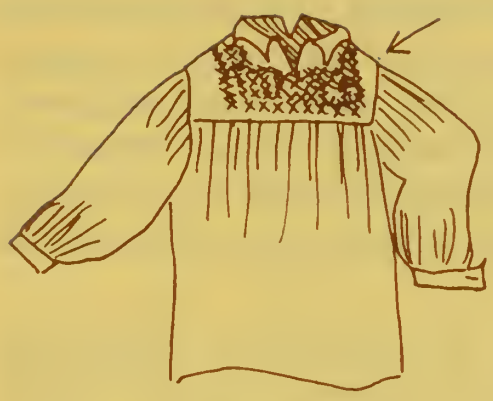
*However, other sources indicate frocks were common farm wear in New England. To quote John Adams: "A frock and trowsers, spade and hoe, will do for my remaining days". Ebenezer Blancher, a runaway servant had on "frock and trowsers, over a dark homespun jacket and breeches". (Boston Gazette, supplement, February 26, 1770).

SMOCKING ON FRONT
AND/OR BACK
OPTIONAL



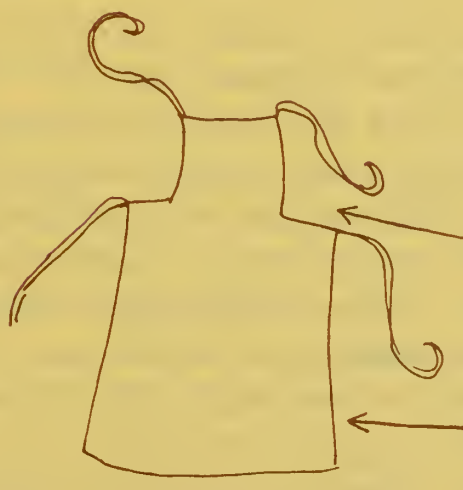
FRONT

BACK

FARMER'S FROCK: Almost knee length

MINISTER'S BANDS
on a stock

Black academic gown



Waist

Mid calf

CRAFTMAN'S LEATHER APRON
can be cut from one piece.

FABRICS

The two most common fabrics of 18th Century New England were wool and linen. These were mostly grown, spun and woven at home, but many Boston merchants also advertised them in newspapers. Very early in New England's history, the colonists did not bother to "full" the woolen cloth (clean, shrink, and thicken the weave); however, by the 1700's there were fulling factories throughout the colonies, and fine wool was produced.

The stalk of the flax plant produced the material for linen. The term "homespun" does not necessarily mean uneven coarsely woven fabric. There were many accomplished spinners and weavers who could produce fine even cloth. Stripes, checks and plaids, as well as solid fabric could be woven on a loom. Most yarn was dyed (after it was spun and before it was woven) using indigo or homegrown natural dyes. Indigo, although usually purchased by the farm wife, was relatively cheap, easy to use, and produced beautiful shades, ranging from sky blue to dark blue. Following is a list of some of the dyes that were easily available to any farm wife: marigold flowers (greenish yellow dye), goldenrod (pale green) beets (yellow to apricot), broom (yellow) cow parsley (green), dock (bright yellow), mulberries (plum, pink), mulberry leaves (yellow) onion skins (rust to orange), box bark (fawn pink). For red colors, the imported brazilwood or cochineal (an insect) could be purchased.

Concerning that most interesting printed cotton. . . . . .

There has been much debate on the availability of printed cotton in 18th Century New England. To clarify the issue, a brief history of printed cotton follows.

Indian printed cottons were quite a novelty to 17th Century England. They became so popular in England that by 1701 the English silk and wool industries forced the Government to prohibit the import. Smuggling still provided some printed cottons for the very elegant. Slowly, the English developed the technical processes of printing on cotton, and by 1720 calico printing establishments had been set up near London. The silk and wool industries then pushed through an act to prohibit use and wearing of English manufactured printed cotton. So the English printers resorted to printing on linen, or on a mixture of linen and cotton even though linen did not take the print process as well as cotton. Finally, in 1774 the prohibition against the home sale and wear of printed all-cotton goods was lifted. By 1785 in London, printed cotton (of poor quality) was fast becoming a staple for the lower classes.

What about New England? In 18th Century Boston newspapers there are advertisements for printed calicoes, presumably the very calicoes that were prohibited in England and therefore, shipped for sale to the colonies. There are also Indian prints advertised. However, the price of the printed fabric was quite high compared to plain linen or woolen weave. Many of these Indian calicoes were hand painted, and even the English calicoes were block printed, a time-consuming process. The cheaper and easier roll printing technique had not yet been developed. The political scene of 1760-1780 New England also affected the availability of fabric. As early as 1767 broadsides were printed advocating the boycott of all English imported fabrics. Songs extolled the virtues of a lady in homespun cloth, and by 1770 ladies of many New England towns had pledged to use only homespun and to shun the gaudy English fripperies. The spinning wheel became a symbol of patriotism, and spinning contests were held on many town greens. However, through all this printed cotton was still advertised (by brave merchants) in the newspapers.

The dilemma of historical accuracy. . . . . .

To be completely accurate, one should grow flax for linen, raise sheep for wool (using historically accurate sheep, mind you), spin, weave, and dye the cloth for clothes. The facilities are not available to everyone obviously, and the degree of accuracy largely depends on finances, purpose, and dedication. There are some excellent sources around for linen, silk, and wool. In many cases drapery linens can be purchased cheaply as remnants. If finances are low, or if one's dedication is not quite up to the cleaning problems of linen and wool, there are some easy to care for look-like-linen cottons. Muslin was advertised in 18th Century newspapers and was available in Massachusetts, although it too (being cotton) was imported.

Be extremely careful in choosing printed cotton for your garment. Today's prints are so much more sophisticated. First visit the Fine Arts Museum in Boston and spend a few hours in the Textiles room. To find copies of these prints will involve much searching in fabric stores. Do not trust modern fabric companies that advertise "exact reproductions of colonial prints". Many times they adapt the print to make it more fitting to 20th Century decor. If you do not like plain fabric, an alternative might be to do as many farm women did: embroider designs onto your petticoat, stomacher, or gown.

Most importantly, keep in mind who and what you are trying to represent. A farm woman out in western Massachusetts was much more likely to homespin all her fabrics than a rich Bostonian lady with Loyalist tendencies. A lower-class market woman of Boston would probably not spin and weave but she would have second or third-hand clothing, out-dated in style by ten or twenty years and quite worn.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Most fashion books deal with upper-class court dress and say little about rural and middle-class attire. Therefore, a further study of rural clothing includes the use of primary sources (sources from the 18th Century in this case) for information.

Portraits and Prints. Prints or engravings were becoming a popular art form, both in Europe and in America. Quite often these depict city life, and include the merchants and the market class. These engravings were often produced as social commentaries, and so they tend to exaggerate and stereotype.

Portraits are especially helpful when studying hairstyles, jewelry, and posture. The clothing study here is helpful but not strictly dependable; sometimes people told the artist what type and color outfit they would like, and the artist painted clothing from imagination, not necessarily depicting what the person wore. However, basic styles and fashions usually fit the time and area. Many 18th Century portraits and prints can be found in the Museum of Fine Arts. Usually good large pictures and prints can be found in the books of your town library.

Newspapers. 18th Century newspapers often listed advertisements for fabric and clothing, and notices of run-aways that detailed exactly what clothes were worn. Many local libraries contain partial or complete copies of these newspapers, usually on microfilm. And, if your town does not have them, remember that everyone in Massachusetts can obtain a Boston Public Library card. Ask for the Boston Gazette, or the Boston Newsletter of 1750-1774, and ask to be shown how to use the microfilm reader.

Inventories, Wills. To be found in the probate records of your town (usually on microfilm). Wills sometimes mention clothing, but usually inventories that include "personal estate" are the most helpful.

Diaries. Some diaries have been published and can be borrowed from local libraries. See the bibliography for a few suggestions.

PRIMARY SOURCE SAMPLE: NEWSPAPER MISSING PERSON ADS

"Jane Kirk, servant recently come from England to Plymouth, ran away December 1770. . .she speaks very broad. She had on a red stuff gown, loose gown over it, a striped woolinsey petticoat, and a yellow quilt petticoat. . ."

- - - Boston Gazette, Jan. 1, 1770

"Stop Thief and Runaway Man Servant.
WHEREAS William Hayward, Baker, absconded himself from my Service 16th March, 1774, and took with him to the value of Eight Pounds, L.M. and he being taken and convicted, voluntarily Bound himself, to serve me Six Months, to Pay Damages & Cost; and he last Night absconded himself again; had on an old Felt Hat, an old cloth coloured Coat and Waistcoat, check'd woolen Shirt, a pair of new cloth colour'd Breeches, a Pair of old pale blue Stockings, and a Pair of single Sole Shoes — Said Hayward is about Thirty three years of age, Five Feet Five Inches high, darkish short hair, and down look like a Rogue and Thief. . . . .Five Dollars Reward.
Marlboro April 9, 1775. Isaac Sherman.
All bakers are hereby Cautioned against employing said Servant."

- - - Boston Gazette, May 9, 1774

"RAN away from his Master on Friday Evening last, a Negro Boy, named GOREE, about 16 years of age, 5 feet three inches High, had on when he want away, a brown Cloth Coat, dark velvet Waistcoat, white shirt, white linen Breeches, grey yarn stockings, a pair of Shoes tore at the Heels, with Pinchbeck Buckles, an old felt Hat. . .Reward and necessary charges paid by DANIEL VOSE. . . .Milton, May 30, 1774."

- - - Boston Gazette, May 30, 1774

"FOUR DOLLARS REWARD. RAN AWAY from the subscriber on the 22 of September at Night a Man Servant, by the name of CATO, about five feet and Eight Inches high, speaks broken and walks and Walks as if he was lame in the Heels. Had on when he went away, a Cloth Coat, with Pewter Buttons, old Leather Breeches, a Tow Shirt, old Shoes with Silver plate Buckles, wore a Cap, and shoves around his neck, and very high on his Forehead: Carried away with him a Callico Banyan, fine linen shirt, Check Linen Trowsers, grey Wigg, also carries or wears a Felt Hatt with a Silver Lace on it, had a Violin and carries it in a green Bays Bag. . .Reward and charges paid by Levi Nichol, Winchenden. . . ."

- - - Boston Gazette, October 10, 1774

PRIMARY SOURCE SAMPLE: INVENTORIES
(Personal estate)

These are only partial inventories. After listing clothing they continue with furniture, farm tools, and barrels of cider and grain. The numbers on the right indicate the monetary value of the item. Twelve pence equal one shilling, twenty shillings make up a pound.

A listing of 3.5.4 means 3 pounds, 5 shillings, 4 pence.

A slash (/) also means shillings, thus, 3/ means 3 shillings.

INVENTORY #1

An inventory of the Personal Estate. . .of Mr. Samuel Jones, yeoman, Late of Concord. .Taken. . .by us The Subscribers December 1755. .

Bever Hatt	0.13.4
Blue Coat	1.6.8
White Jacoat	0.4.0
Leather Breechers	0.10.8
Bearkin Coat	0.16.0
Blue Jacoat	0.10.8
old Blue Coat	0.12.0
old Blue Jacoat	0.8.0
Great Coat	0.8.0
Blue Jacoat	0.2.8
Blue Breeches	0.1.4
Cotton Breechers	0.2.0
two woollen Shirts	0.5.4
two Cotton Shirts	0.6.0
Holland Shirt	0.9.4
two Linen Shirts	0.6.0
two Shirts more	0.5.4
Seven pair of Stockins	0.18.4
one pair of Shoes	0.2.5
Buckels	0.0.8
under wescoat	0.0.8
two pair of Leather Breeches	0.2.0

INVENTORY #2 (William Wilson lived in Concord)

Inventory of the Real and Personal Estate of William Wilson Gentleman taken October 17, 1741. . .

Item. his apparril:	one Dyed Stright(?) bodyed coat	5.00.00
	one hat 16 shillings	
	one Callaminco Jacket & Breches	3.00.00
	one green broad Cloth Coat	2.10.00
	one Dyed allwooll wastcoat 20 shillings	
	a pair of gray Woollen breches 13 shillings	
	one great Coat	2.05.00
	one fine shirt & three Cotten	
	Shirts 20 shillings	
	one pair of Shoes & two pair of yarn	
	hoes 20 shillings	
	one pair of gloves 2 shillings 6 pence	
	one staffe 2s	
	one gun 10s	

INVENTORY #3

An inventory of the Estate Real and Personal whereof Mr. Job Brooks Late of Concord in the county of Middlesex yeoman, Deceased — September 1794.

Blue coat and Jackcoat and Britches 39/
Two gray coats and Jackcoats 15/
cloth coloured coat and Black Jackcoat 15/
two pairs Black Britches 12/
Two blue gray Jackcoats 10/
Two other Jackcoats 6/
A pair of deerskin Britches 8/ Beaver hatt 36/
Blue coat 9/ three pair old Britches 2/ Blue Great coat 12/
Gray great coat 3/ pair of Britches not made 3/
Boots and shoes 6/
Nine pair of Stockings 22/ 6 Mittin and Garters 1/
Woolen caps 1/6
Eleven shirts 52/ seven caps 1/6
four pair gloves 1/6
Hat case and old hatt 1/6
pair Spectorcals 1/

INVENTORY#4

An inventory of the Personal Estate of Submit Flint, widow of Nehemiah Hunt, Late of Concord. She died 1792.

a red cloak
a riding hood
a petticoat
a linen handkerchief
a stript lawn apron
black silk handkerchief

INVENTORY #5

Inventory of the personal Estate of Mrs. Sarah Wilson, May 1763.

Cash 1.16.0
Black Taffity Gound 2.00.0
Satin Gound 1.6.8
Calleminco Gound 18/
Flowered Rusell Gound 16/
Drouged Gound 8/
Blue Quilted Coat 6/
Two Coats more 7/
Velvit hood 6/
Three pair of gloves 1/6
Ten caps 4/6
four Shifts 3/
pair Stays 4/
Two Wescoats 1/8
Riding Hood 1.00.0
an old Hood 4/
Silkerape (?) Gound 6/
Straw Bonnet 6/

PRIMARY SOURCE SAMPLE: Diary

The diary of Anna Green Winslow, a twelve-year-old schoolgirl who lived in 1771-1772 Boston (see bibliography). Note: a "constitation" in this case is an all girls' party. "Jan. 11th, 1772. . .I was going to a constitation. . .I was dress'd in my yellow coat, black bib & apron, black feathers on my head, my past comb, & all my past garnet marquesett & jet pins, togetether with my silver plume, my loket, rings, black collar round my neck, black mitts & 2 or 3 yards of blue ribbin (black and blue is high tast) striped tucker and ruffels (not my best) & my silk shoes compleated my dress."

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